

THE PERKINS FAMILY

Mr. Perkins Brings His Philosophy to Bear on Fishing.

"WHY CATCH THEM?" HE ASKS

Put the Problem Up to Mrs. Perkins. Calls His Word Mere Sophistry. There is No Place Like Home For a Philosopher.

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Mr. Perkins, family philosopher and take it easy, had been smoking his cigar and reading the evening paper for ten minutes when Mrs. Perkins, who had been sketching over a book, laid it aside and said:
"Mr. Perkins, do you realize that the summer is about gone?"
"Perfectly, my dear; perfectly," he replied. "That's a way summer has had ever since I knew anything about the seasons."
"Last December, one night when the snow was knee deep and there was a



"YOU ARE TOSSED TWENTY FEET HIGH ON HIS HORNS."

perfect gale blowing, we sat right where we do now, and you spoke up and said that if you ever lived to see another summer you'd go fishing at least once a week and take me with you. Perhaps you can recall your words?"

"Last December! Last December! Let me consult my memorandum book. A great many things have happened since last December. Let us see. Here under date of Dec. 22 I find the following entry:

"Snowing and blowing. Winter in earnest. Wife and I are as cozy as you please. Just observed to her that if we live to see next summer we'll go fishing every week."

"That's what I find entered, Mrs. Perkins. And did you wish to pass any remarks on the record?"

"Yes, I do. Have we been fishing one single time this whole summer long?"

"Not that I remember of, my dear."

"Haven't I spoken about it twenty different times?"

"I should say twenty was about the number."

"And each time you've said you'd see about it, and we didn't go."

"You are correct."

"Well, have you any explanations to make?"

"Um! My dear, I have often told you never to make explanations when you could avoid them. Explanations may explain or they may not. They may render everything clear or mix things worse than before. If you feel that you could get along without explanations it would be a favor to me."

"But I don't feel that way. We were to go fishing most every day this summer. We haven't gone a single time. Why haven't we?"

On Philosophical Principles.
"My dear Mrs. Perkins," said Mr. Perkins as he laid his paper aside, "we shall have to go into this matter as a whole and decide it on philosophical principles. We will do it at once and have it over with. And, by the way, I promise you any number of sleigh rides now for next January."

"And you will keep that promise as you have kept this one?" she retorted.

"First and foremost, why do people go fishing? The natural answer is, to catch fish. We have been fishing thirty times and never even had a nibble. Twenty times did not discourage me, but thirty did."

"Why catch fish at all? You will answer, to eat them. You catch them, bring them home, dress them, fry them, serve them, and you taste a mouthful and throw the rest to the cat. It has cost you at least \$3 to get what you could have bought at the market for 50 cents. Notice the economic problem here presented."

"Oh, I'm noticing!" replied Mrs. Perkins. "You are already paying the way to make a sneak."

"But we go fishing and don't catch any fish," he continued. "We are out our time and the cost of bait. We have several squabbles while fishing. We have more coming home. We have still others after arriving. We are tired. We are sunburned. We are mad. Moral, don't go fishing."

"To go fishing we must ride two miles on a street car and then cross a field with a bull in it."

"Fuses blow out and set street cars on fire."

"Street cars have a way of running off the track and killing passengers. Conductors carry guns. They may go

off by accident.
"If we escape all the dangers incident to street cars we still have the bull to reckon with. One can never

tell when a bull is going to take exceptions to your hat, your clothing or even your gait. He decides that he doesn't love you a bit and comes for you. You are tossed twenty feet high on his horns, and when you come down the vital spark has fled."

"The vital nonsense!" contemptuously exclaimed Mrs. Perkins.

"Suppose, however, that the bull takes no exceptions to our clothes and gait and permits us to pass on. We climb two rail fences and reach an old wharf. We tempt Providence by standing on it. We fish for hours and catch no fish. By innuendo I call you a hoodoo. By innuendo I call you a liar. I at once begin to think of the cheap tombstone I shall buy you at your death, and you at once begin to wonder if you've got to put up with me for five or ten years longer."

"Your words are mere sophistry, Mr. Perkins. You can crawl through the smallest knothole of any man I ever saw."

"But let us go back a little, Mrs. Perkins—let us go back. I was thinking one day last May that we'd go fishing next day when I happened to open a medical pamphlet. There was a treatise in it on fish."

"Oh, of course!"

"It was stated that the fresh fish of this country were responsible for 200,000 deaths per year."

"I will never believe it—never!"

As to Fresh Fish.
"Fresh fish, according to that treatise, are liable to various forms of blood poisoning, and when eaten they communicate the ailment to the eater. You may congratulate yourself on escaping some form of blood poisoning, Mrs. Perkins. You may have escaped death itself."

"What's the use of listening to such twaddle!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins as she rose up.

"Sit down, my dear," he replied. "You wanted to know why I didn't take you fishing this summer, and I am trying to give you a lucid explanation. I had my doubts of the truth of the article in the pamphlet, and I called on an eminent physician. He corroborated all the statements of the writer. In fact, about five years ago he and his wife went fishing, and a large pickerel they caught and took home and cooked gave them both a case of blood poisoning. He lost a leg and she an arm in consequence. Do I wish to lose a leg? Do I wish you to lose an arm?"

"I don't believe the yarn."

"It struck me that you wouldn't, my dear, and so I overhauled a medical encyclopedia. There I found that:

"Sturgeon may give you cramps."
"Pickerel may sow the seeds of tuberculosis."

"Bass may bring on cases of asthma."
"Pike fried in butter and crumbs have caused insanity."

"Perch have caused melancholia and loss of appetite."
"Minnows have caused swelling of the gums and loss of teeth."

"The eating of bullheads has been the first step to crime."

"There the list ceased, Mrs. Perkins, and I ceased with it. I saw and realized the tremendous risk we ran, and whenever you approached the subject of going a-fishing I switched you off. Now that you know all you cannot blame me? On the contrary, I look for praise instead. You are Mrs. Perkins No. 2. I had a hard struggle to get you. I want to keep you. Love and duty have been my guiding stars in this matter. As I said, I will promise you many sleigh rides in January and February, and I will make a note of the same in my book. Next summer, in case the fish recover their normal health"—

"Good night, Mr. Perkins," she said as she swept out of the room.

"—we may possibly go fishing," he finished, and then he reached for the paper, lifted the cat into his lap and realized that there was no place like home—for a philosopher.

M. QUAD.

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